

# YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

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CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota, RAC Chairman

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## Meeting Minutes -- June 21, 2007

MSU-Billings College of Business – Room 163

**Members Present:** Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Steve Story, Stillwater CD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; Jerry O'Hair, Park CD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

**Others Present:** Warren Kellogg, NRCS/TAC; Burt Williams, TNC/TAC; Robert Lubbers, YRF; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Jim Robinson, DNRC/TAC; Greg Johnson, COE; Mack Cole, RAC; Jeff Mosely, MSU Extension, Joe Scianna, NRCS Plant Material Center, Liz Ching, Baucus Office, Rachel Stagg Tester Office; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; LaVerne Ivy, Yellowstone CD; Gary Zaresft, Jack Rice, Hank Lordeman, Adam Garther, City of Glendive; Pam Tierney, Crissafulli Dawson County; Scott Bockness, Yellowstone County Weed Superintendent; Laurie Kelley, Rosebud CD; Bobbi Vannattan, Rosebud CD; and Carol Watts, Custer CD Administrator.

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Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:05 pm on Thursday, June 21, 2007. Introductions were made.

**City of Glendive:** Several representatives from the City of Glendive were in attendance to present a request for support from the YRCDC Council for investigation of flood and ice impacts due to the Interstate 94 Bridge. Handouts were provided and maps were posted on the board. A presentation was made about how the construction of the bridge had influenced flooding and ice events over time. A proposal was made and funding was discussed.

Greg Johnson, COE stated that a COE engineer will start work this week and more will be known after his studies.

Don Youngbauer, Chairman of the Council suggested that the Council get involved and requested that a draft position paper be written that the Council could review and approve at the next meeting. Jim Robinson and Greg Johnson of the TAC will work on a draft for the Council to consider.

**Russian Olive TAC Recommendation and Discussion:** Warren Kellogg introduced Jeff Mosely of MSU Extension service who spoke to the Council about his work with Russian olive tree removal. Jeff said that Russian olive trees although not considered invasive in the past have hit a threshold and are now becoming a problem. They are not like Salt Cedar which, require a lot of water. They can tolerate undesirable conditions and co-exist with other plants. Thorns keep animals from grazing when the trees become too thick. Mosely said we will not eradicate Russian olive from Montana but they need to be managed. Mosely has a tree shear mounted on a skid-steer loader which can cut down a tree at the ground level in seconds. Trees are then hauled away or burned and the remaining stump treated with herbicide. The area can be grazed with goats to prevent sprouting. Mosely has been involved with a tree removal project at Fort Keogh and is willing to help with any projects the Council may have.

Joe Scianna, NRCS of the Bridger Plant Material Center spoke on how to restore an area once the Russian olive trees have been cleared out in order to avoid erosion and weeds. He had a PowerPoint presentation and a report, which was handed out to the Council members. Follow up and long term maintenance is extremely important. Scianna said that the Russian olive trees were not all bad, and they have deep roots and provide site stabilization. When planning riparian restoration Scianna recommended using as many native species as possible. Some alternative trees would be green ash, peach leaf willow, box elder, chokecherry and silverberry. In grassy areas that might be disturbed it is important to establish ground cover with forbes, such as wild mint and smart weed.

Scianna said that the Plant Material Center would also be willing to cooperate with any demonstration projects that the Council might undertake.

Robert Lubbers, Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society spoke next. Lubbers handed out a publication called "Montana Audubon Russian Olive Guidance Document". The Society has worked successfully to get the Russian olive tree taken off the NRCS preferred list of plants and continues to urge DNRC to stop selling them. They are also urging the MT FWP to stop recommending them for wildlife habitat planting.

Lubbers said that the National Audubon Society was not ready to make a statement concerning Russian olive trees at this time. Russian olive may be considered a good tree for bird habitat but cottonwoods and willows are better. Note the bird list in the back of the publication.

Warren called attention to the changes that had been made to the first draft of the Russian olive BMP. The BMP applies only to the Yellowstone River valley. Public lands will be included as well as private lands. After some discussion John Moorhouse made a motion that the Council accept this as voluntary best management practice for Russian olive and further urged the Council to begin taking steps to implement this policy through public outreach. Paul Gilbert seconded the motion, none were opposed and the motion carried. Warren was directed by the Council to work with the RAC on an implementation strategy.

Scott Bockness, Yellowstone County Weed District Supervisor agreed with the wording in the statement and said he would publish it in his newsletter.

#### **Draft Intake Diversion Position Paper:**

The next subject to be discussed was the position to be taken by the Council on the Intake diversion fish passage issue. Greg Johnson gave a brief update on alternatives being discussed for the Intake diversion, explaining the fish screen and rock ramp to members of the audience who were not familiar with it. Brent Esplin commented that this would be a federal project in an effort to protect the Pallid Sturgeon. If nothing is done it is projected that the Pallid Sturgeon will only be in existence until 2017. Warren said that no changes had been made to the first draft of the written statement. Warren sent the draft out for comments and none were received. The statement is ready to be taken to the individual districts. Don Youngbauer called on Orvin Finsaas to express his concerns. Orvin said the Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project will fully cooperate with the Army Corps of Engineers in their efforts to save the Pallid Sturgeon. There is concern that failure to do so could result in irrigation water being shut off.

Nicole McClain read the draft Intake position statement and Orvin made a motion to approve it as a draft, Paul Gilbert seconded and the motion passed. This will be put on next month's agenda for discussion and final approval. Warren requested that any comments be sent to him prior to the meeting.

#### **TAC Report:**

Warren reported that the TAC meeting held the previous day and a half focused on developing scopes of work for water quality, fisheries, and wetlands. See attachment. The revised scopes of work will be brought to the Council in July.

Jim Robinson has revised the GIS scope of work and has written work order #4 for the YRCDC contract 012 with DTM Consulting. There is currently \$19,000.00 left in this contract, which is not enough to complete the work order. Work order #4 will develop a data base for the Riparian scope of work and a larger data base for the cumulative effects. It is funded by the RDGP 05 grant. Jim noted that there is a web address to access this specific work and he will gladly address any questions about this subject.

A new RFP will be sent out to continue the GIS work in work order #4 and get a contract in place. Steve Story made a motion to approve work order number four and send out RFPs to extend the GIS contract, John Moorhouse seconded and the motion carried.

Warren had a visit from Roger Perkins of Aqua Engineering and he has several ideas for designs that he would like the Council's Support on. Warren says that if the Council is interested they should invite Roger to attend a meeting in the future to present his ideas. The Council was not interested at this time.

Greg Johnson spoke about the FY2008 budget. He said there is currently \$200,000.00 based on the cut that was made in 2006. Final figures are not in yet. In addition, Liz Ching stated that it would be beneficial if the Council Chairman kept in contact with the Washington offices.

**Business meeting:** Carol Watts presented the financial reports. The financial statement shows all of the activity in the checking account since the last meeting, and the grant statement shows the status of the current grants. There were no questions asked and the report was accepted and filed for audit.

The May 17<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved with two minor corrections. John Moorhouse made the motion to accept the minutes, Bob Hector seconded and the motion carried.

Walter Rolf reported that the Executive Committee met at 8:00am and pay raises were granted to Carol Watts and Kelly Norwood effective July 1, 2007. Carol thanked the Council. Kelly was absent due to illness.

**Coordinator's Report:** Nicole passed out a report of her activities since the last meeting. She has attended Custer CD and McKenzie CD meetings. She reported that the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant application was submitted on May 29, 2007 and she is working on the PPL Community Fund grant application which is due on July 31, 2007.

LaVerne Ivie discussed the tentative agenda for Yellowstone River Tour scheduled on July 12, 2007 in Yellowstone County. There will be approximately 40 people on four boats, including the Army Corps of Engineers. LaVerne stated a goal of having all of our districts represented on the tour. A TAC member on each boat will provide technical information to participants and include Jim Robinson, Karin Boyd, Ken Frazier and Warren Kellogg. Robert Lubbers or Mike Penfold will be alternates if additional space becomes available. The registration form is attached to Nicole's report.

Nicole reported that the 30W-05-238 grant was expiring on July 31 and it was necessary to pick a display structure so the work could be done on time. She presented her choice from Big Look for a rollup display and the Council agreed with it. Bob Hector made a motion to proceed with acquiring the new display, Phil Fox seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

Nicole stated that letters had been sent out to the conservation districts regarding the overnight schedule for the Yellowstone River Clean-Up project. For more on the clean up see Bob Hector's report below.

Nicole reported that she received an invitation from the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council to have a joint meeting in August. It was suggested that the joint meeting be held at the Missouri-Yellowstone River Confluence Interpretive Center on 8/28/07. A joint tour of the Intake Diversion Dam is scheduled for 8/29/07 and will potentially include both river councils, and the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes (MoRast). MoRast will be in Montana touring Fort Peck Fish Hatchery and Intake at the same time.

Nicole requested permission to attend a MWCC Fall Training from 9/17-9/19 in Seeley Lake, MT. The fee is \$100.00, and Nicole offered to car pool. Paul Gilbert made a motion that Nicole should attend the training, Steve Story seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

**Yellowstone River Clean up:** Bob Hector reported that the cleanup project is proceeding nicely. The schedule is finalized for MCC Youth crews including where they will be staying overnight. It was attempted to get an overnight site in each county when possible. Letters will be sent to each administrator with more details encouraging them to host some type of activity while the MCC Youth crew is in their area. Administrators will be asked to take pictures for the final wrap up. The crews consist of six to seven youth ages 14 to 16 and a supervisor. Please coordinate activities with Nicole or Kelly. Details for the project kick off happening in Billings at Coulson Park on Sunday July 22 will be made available as soon as they are completed.

**RAC Update:** John Moorhouse handed out letters of recommendations for Robert Lubbers appointment to the RAC. John made a motion that Lubbers be accepted as a RAC member, Bob Hector seconded and the motion carried. Robert Lubbers was welcomed on board as a new RAC member.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment. The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm. The next meeting will be 10:00am July 12, 2007 at Coulson Park prior to the Yellowstone River tour.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

**Yellowstone River TAC Meeting Notes**  
**Billings, MT**  
**6/19-20/2007**

***Biology***

Water Quality

- Boris Krizek (RAC & City of Billings) gave a presentation on Billings' storm water and source water protection programs. There may be opportunities for the YRCDC and the City to work jointly on public outreach and education efforts. The BMPs associated with these programs may also fit into the Council's BMP development effort.
- Holly Sessions & Suzanna Cruthers (MSU-Bozeman) described the water quality project initiated on the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District (BRID). 1) They are comparing water quality discharges on the BRID where land improvements have been installed with other parts of the BRID where there have not been significant improvements. 2) They will also be looking at pump records to determine if the volume of water to serve the area with improvements has been reduced. 3) They will be running a landscape model to determine if there has been large scale changes in flow and nutrients to the Yellowstone River. 4) Complete a survey of the BRID irrigators to hear what their thoughts are regarding these improvements, what kinds of BMPs they are willing to adopt (or not adopt), etc.
- Mike Suplee (MT DEQ) discussed a DEQ project on the lower Yellowstone River (Forsyth to Glendive) to develop a water quality model to derive numeric nutrient criteria that would protect beneficial uses (recreation and aquatic life). Mike is planning on doing two sampling runs (calibration and validation) this summer during low flows on the river mainstem and selected irrigation ditches intake/return points. Results will be available by spring, 2008. Mike has contacted Dave Schwarz for help in contacting the managers of the irrigation systems that he would like to sample.
- Rosie Sada (MT DEQ) gave an up-date on DEQ's progress with determining impairments of the Yellowstone River mainstem. Nutrient monitoring and criteria development is moving forward, but temperature and sediment is on hold until monitoring criteria can be resolved with EPA. There will likely not be any TMDL planning before 2010.
- A revised water quality scope of work is still needed. DEQ will likely not be able to assist in the near future so it was suggested that we approach USGS to explore what role they might have in a cumulative effects analysis of existing water quality data.

Fisheries

George Jordan handed out a revised draft fisheries scope of work and project overview that he has been working on with a group of fisheries biologists (FWP & MSU). Bob Bramblett (MSU-Bozeman) provided information on a proposed scope and budget if they were to do the work. Comments on the draft scope of work are due to George by July 1st.

Wetlands

Greg Kudray and George Jordan led a discussion on the wetland scope of work. Based upon this discussion, the revised scope of work will include a random sampling of the Yellowstone corridor that will document wetland change (extent and function) over time. An optional task will be included that to complete NWI mapping of the Yellowstone River corridor using 2005 photography. Greg Kudray will work on a revised draft and will be sent out to the TAC for their review and comments. Comments on the revised draft scope of work will be due to George by July 17<sup>th</sup>.

***Information Management/GIS Development***

- Information Management/GIS Scope of Work: Jim Robinson handed out a draft revision of the Information Management and GIS Development Scope of Work. This draft outlines internal as well as external information management. Copies of the scope will be handed out to the Council members for their review and comments. The TAC will be providing comments back to Jim by July 17<sup>th</sup>.
- 310 Permit Web Application: Tony Thatcher (DTM Consulting) provided an up-date and presentation on the Google Map prototype web application that is being working on. Should have a completed prototype by this fall.
- Database Development: Jim Robinson reviewed a proposed Work Order #4 that would fall under the GIS Services Contract with DTM. There is approximately 19K remaining in the contract so there are not sufficient funds to complete all the proposed tasks in Work Order #4. Tasks 1-3 would be funded; Task #4 would not be funded. There will be a need to do a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit bids for another GIS Services contract for 75K. Work Order #4 and a new RFP for a GIS Services contract will be recommended to the Council.

***Geomorphology***

- **Human Impact Timeline:** Discussion on mapping channel and floodplain structures over time on historic aerial photography. An experienced person familiar with river systems and channel structures will need to do the mapping (graduate student or private sector consultant). Jim Robinson will draft a proposal with background, scope, and budget for this work.
- **Channel Planform:** Karin Boyd reviewed the results of Work Order #3 that was completed in May. The data analysis and GIS summaries included channel geomorphology trends over time including channel length, sinuosity, braiding parameters, river complexity index, and channel displacement ratios. Karin also gave an up-date on the Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) work that is on-going. The CMZ delineation on the Lidar counties (Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson) will be completed by September.

### ***Best Management Practices***

The final drafts of the Russian olive BMP and the Intake Diversion position paper were sent out on June 18<sup>th</sup>. The TAC members did not have any additional changes and the drafts as they currently are written will be submitted to the Council for adoption.

### ***Demonstration Projects***

- Roger Perkins (Aquoneering) met with the TAC to talk about two projects that he would like the YRCDC to sponsor:
  - Louver-type screen on irrigation pumping plants intakes. These screens are intended to remove sediment, floating algae, and fish from the pump intakes. There would need to be additional lab work (MSU) first to check out design effectiveness before doing a demonstration project (Hathaway). It was suggested that a SBIR grant may be an appropriate source of funding.
  - Landowner and contractor workshop on “Magnum Buster”, a technique to split rocks and boulders for bank stabilization projects.

### ***Corp of Engineers’ FFY08 Budget***

There is currently 200K in the President’s budget for FFY2008. The YRCDC may want to engage the Montana congressional delegation if they would like to see that amount increased. The Nature Conservancy has been providing support in Washington DC to adequately fund the cumulative effects study.

### ***Yellowstone River Tour***

Nicole McClain and Laurie Zeller went through a tentative agenda for the July 12<sup>th</sup> boat tour for the Corp of Engineers. There will be 40 people on 4 jet boats. A recon boat run will be conducted this coming weekend to finalize stops. TAC members who volunteered to be on the tour are Jim Robinson, Karin Boyd, Ken Frazier, and Warren Kellogg. Burt Williams is an alternate. There will be a “dry” run on the river for the TAC members on the afternoon of July 11<sup>th</sup>.